HOW TO GET GOOD ROADS AT LOW COST

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BY THE FREQUENT USE OF SPLIT LOG DRAGS MANY ROADS COULD BE KEPT IN FINE SHAPE AT VERY LITTLE EXPENSE

DO NOT DESTROY THIS BULLETIN BUT FILE IT WHERE YOU CAN FIND IT WHEN WANTED.
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The first bill for freight on farm crops is presented by the wagon
road—it must be paid in advance. The next is presented by the rail-
road—this can be paid after the freight is delivered.

In the early days when the railroads were poorly constructed, it
frequently cost 10 cents to carry a ton one mile. Now it costs but
three-fourths of a cent. Average wagon roads today charge 25 cents
to carry a ton a mile. Good roads do it for half of this amount, or
even less.

An important question for us all to ask is, "Who pays the freight?"
Does Jones? He does if Jones happens to be the man who lives on the
Who Pays the Freight? good road in an up-to-date community and
hails loads twice the size of Jones' get any
less for his crops? Or does Johnson lose any money when, because
he has good roads to haul over, he markets his crops at times of bad
roads and high prices, while Jones can hardly get to town over his bad
road to bring home a few bags of flour—to say nothing of getting a
load to market?

Jones, however, is not the only one interested in better roads. If
Jones makes more money he can afford to build that new barn he has
Good Roads are Good. needed for years, and the lumber dealer and
the hardware man and the carpenters and
the stone masons will be benefited. If Jones
gets more money for his crops—not necessarily by charging higher
prices, but by simply refusing to pay so much freight, he can open a
bank account and the banker will prosper. He can send his son to the
Short Course in Agriculture to learn how to get larger and better crops
from the same acreage. Incidentally that son will get a broader view
of things and be a better citizen and neighbor—in short a greater asset
to the community. He will be better able to buy his daughter a piano
and put conveniences and comforts in his home so that he and his
family will enjoy life all the more, all of which will make the mer-
chants from whom he buys more prosperous and more willing to con-
tribute to improving the roads. To sum it all up, a community with
good roads is in all ways a better place to live than one with poor roads.

There is no "presto change" or other charm that I know of that is
effective in making a bad road into a good one. It takes strong backs,
"greenbacks" and gray matter. One of the neces-

How to Get Them. sary things to start and carry through a road im-
provement program is that too rare quality—public
spirit. The thing can be properly accomplished only when everybody
pulls together. Another necessary thing is to have someone in charge who knows his business and takes pride in his work.

Five-sixths or more of the road mileage of the state is town road. Almost all of these are dirt roads, but some are built of gravel. The usual method of caring for them is to let them severely alone for several years, then plow them up, turn the sods into the middle with a grader, and without any further attempt at smoothing, leave them alone for another long period. This is the best scheme devised up to date for producing the least results and the maximum of discomfort for the most money. The average cost of doing this is about $25 a year for every mile of road in the State.

Better roads can be made at a cost of $6 a year for a mile. The trouble is to get it done. The virtues of the split log drag have been dinned at the fixers of country roads so effectively that almost every fence corner has one in it—hidden by a rank crop of weeds and brush so that no one has seen it since the first year it was made. Yes, now that you think back, that drag did make a surprising improvement in your road the year you first used it. But after that first year you forgot to use it, or "you'd be blamed if you would drag when the fellows down the road left their road in such bad shape," or you didn't like the road boss—anyway that drag hasn't been used for the last five years.

That is where public spirit comes in. It takes considerable of it to keep on dragging year after year until you really, thoroughly convince the whole district that dragging is the only way to make a dirt road; until a man would no more brave the established public sentiment by leaving the road by his farm undragged than he would brave it by beating his wife or setting fire to his dog. It ought to be considered an offense against the community, so that a man would feel the disapproval of his neighbors, when he fails to drag his road.

Did somebody ask what a split log drag is like? It doesn't seem possible. Space is too limited here to tell about it, but there is a picture of one on the front page of this bulletin, and your agricultural paper has a good cut of it and will be glad to use it on the slightest excuse and tell you all about it. Just write them a letter and see.

Nothing has been said about the foolishness of going up hill when you can go round, or going straight up when you can choose a gentle, easy grade. It really doesn't seem as though anything needed to be said on this—it is so plain that a word (to the wise) ought to be sufficient. Relocating roads to get proper grades is not an easy matter, but if you need help the state highway commission is ready to assist you.
The various county boards have selected for each county, a system of main-travelled roads leading into each town in the county. These main-travelled roads make up about one-sixth of the total road mileage of the state. Any road on this system can be permanently improved at the joint expense of the town and county, each paying equal shares, and the state paying the remainder, not exceeding one-third. When they are so improved they become state roads and the county must maintain them. Until they become state roads they are town roads and the town builds and maintains them.

The final matter to be discussed here is how to get this state and county aid. There are three methods. In all three the power to start the ball rolling is left in the hands of the local people. Neither the county highway commissioner, nor the state highway commission has any power to compel any road to be improved, except in very unusual and urgent cases.*

One method is to get someone to donate money to pay the town’s full share of the cost. Another is to take up a subscription to pay half of the town’s share. In this case the town board is compelled by law to levy the other half as a tax. The usual method, however, is to vote in the spring town meeting. A special tax of not less than $400 may be voted for improving any part of the system the town meeting selects.

When the money is available under any of the three methods named, the town board sends a petition to the county clerk by September 1st and he forwards it to the state highway commission. The county’s and state’s shares then come automatically and the following year the county highway commissioner builds the road.

In 1914 there will be $4,500,000 spent on state aided roads. This means that state, county, and town taxes were levied for this purpose in January to the extent of about $1,500,000 of each. Four and a half million dollars is a big addition to the tax roll and all of us felt it. Is it worth while? The answer we must sit down and figure out, as suggested in the first page of this pamphlet. Would we rather keep the 4½ millions in our pockets and pay mud road freights, have our boys and girls leave the farm, have poor schools, and all the other things that go with bad roads, or would we rather have the 4½ millions on the road? The answer I believe is to be found in the fact that out of 1,588 local units of government eligible for state aid, 1,211 asked for and will receive county and state aid in 1914. Is your town one of the 1,211 or one of the others?

*Anyone who desires to get his town started should write the State Highway Commission at Madison for a copy of the law.